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DE FACTO SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS--A POSITION PAPER FOR
THE GUIDANCE OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND AGENCIES.

BY- GOLDMAN, AARON AND OTHERS

NATIONAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL

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BASED ON THE POSITION THAT RACIAL INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOOD EDUCATION, THIS PAMPHLET
PRESENTS THE POSITION OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES RELEVANT TO SCHOOL
DESEGREGATION-- (1) SEGREGATION IN THE NORTH, (2) FEASIBLE
MEANS OF DESEGREGATION, (3) EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT AND
SPECIAL SERVICES, (4) COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES, (5) THE
NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL AND Busing, (6) PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS
(SCHOOL PAIRING, SCHOOL PARKS, AND REVISION OF SCHOOL
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES), AND (7) THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL
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De Facto Segregation^{UD}
in Public Schools

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ABSTRACTED

A Position Paper

for the guidance of

Jewish communities and agencies

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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National Community Relations Advisory Council
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THIS POSITION PAPER on De Facto Segregation in Public Schools is the product of almost a year of discussion, drafting and revision. A joint meeting of the NCRAC Committees on Civil Rights and Work With Educational Institutions, after discussion, instructed a subcommittee to prepare a draft. That draft was circulated for comment to all the constituent agencies (see list, page 16) in the Spring of 1964. The draft, together with comments received, was submitted to the Plenary Session of the NCRAC in June, 1964. The Plenary Session adopted it in substance with various emendations, referring it back to the drafting committee for editing. The paper was approved in its final form by the Executive Committee of the NCRAC at its meeting of October 18, 1964.

It is not contemplated that the recommendations in this statement — or any of the recommendations developed in the NCRAC — will be applied uncritically by every member agency, but rather that they will be regarded by each agency or community as a general guide, to be used as a basis for the planning of the program of each agency or community, each accepting, modifying or rejecting any of the recommendations, according to its own judgments, resources and needs.

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Introduction

IN FURTHERANCE of our long-standing commitment to equality of opportunity, we have sought constantly the elimination of all forms of segregation in public education. We have deemed it a key problem to build bridges and promote associations among children that will honor and promote regard for group differences. We have long recognized that the strategic position of the public school makes it an ideal instrumentality for that purpose. We have urged public school districting with a view to creating diversified rather than homogeneous student bodies and have advocated experimentation with school district boundary revision, site selection, pupil transfer and other procedures designed to help the public schools realize the values of integration as a positive factor in educating for democracy. We have repeatedly advocated enrichment of educational services for all deprived and disadvantaged pupils.

We subscribe to and issue the present statement at this time because the need for action now to alleviate the entrenched evils of de facto racial segregation in public schools is urgent; issues that have become obscured and confused require clarification; and Jewish community relations agencies and others need a systematic guide in determining their roles.

Statement of Position

RACIAL SEGREGATION is antithetical to democracy, wherever it occurs. Its deliberate cultivation or perpetuation is a blatant repudiation of the root ideas of democracy — equality and justice. Nowhere in our society is racial segregation more destructive in its effects than in our public schools.

The objective of our public education system is to lead children to develop their capacities to the highest and most satisfying degree and to prepare them to live effectively in our society and to contribute to its general well-being.

One of the crucial criteria by which the adequacy of education for such democratic living must be evaluated is the criterion of its effectiveness in fostering among pupils attitudes and relationships based on mutual respect for difference. The fostering of such mutual respect among pupils of different races is promoted in a racially

✓ integrated setting. Racial integration in public schools thus is an essential component of good education in our society. It is not a substitute for quality. Neither is it an alternative to quality.

✓ ***Racial integration and quality education are mutually complementary and interdependent.***

Separation of some children "from others of similar age and qualification because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone," said the United States Supreme Court in its ruling in the *Brown* case. Certainly, the Negro child so stigmatized — and the stigma is much the same in the child's mind whether his segregation is enforced by law or by custom or merely by circumstance — is impaired in his motivation to learn and therefore his capability to learn. The white child attending a segregated school, which by its racial exclusiveness implicitly reaffirms and reinforces the myth of inherent white superiority, is scarcely being prepared ideally for effective living in a society made up of different racial groups.

De Facto Segregation in the North

Ten years after the United States Supreme Court struck down statutory racial segregation in public schools, de facto racial segregation in public schools remains widespread in northern cities, where it has no sanction in law.

A product of many influences, de facto public school segregation is most immediately related to prevailing patterns of housing segregation. Other factors that have contributed to it are sharpened economic stratification of the population, the flight of middle class families to the suburbs and substantial movement of white pupils into non-public schools.

De facto public school segregation in northern cities is by no means merely a concomitant of such circumstances, however. In some communities it is the product of deliberate planning; in many others it is the legacy of practices initiated many years ago and left undisturbed.

In these northern cities many of the public schools that are predominantly or entirely Negro in pupil composition are also the poorest schools. Generations of anti-Negro discrimination have bred concentrations of Negro populations in the lowest economic strata of our urban populations and in the slums of our sprawling cities. With exceptions that are just striking enough to prove the rule, Negro schools are slum schools. They

are for the most part not only racially segregated, but old, physically deteriorated, badly equipped, overcrowded and understaffed, with large proportions of substitute and uncertified teachers, among whom there is excessive turnover. The curricula, the teaching methods, and the instructional materials in these schools frequently are irrelevant to the experience of the pupils and alien to the world in which they perceive themselves as living.

Some Feasible Means of Desegregation

Ten years after the *Brown* ruling, the righting of these inequities and educational shortcomings is long overdue. The elimination of de facto racial segregation from our public schools must be given high priority as a matter of public policy and educational purpose.

The need for prompt, effective steps toward public education programs that bring white and Negro children together in the best learning experiences that it is possible to provide for all of them is urgent.

While complete desegregation of all de facto segregated public schools at once, everywhere, is not feasible, we believe that the means are at hand for such complete desegregation in some smaller cities, for substantial desegregation in many, and for significant beginning steps in all. To these ends, we endorse and urge the application, where appropriate, of

1. Revision of school district boundaries in order to bring populations more nearly balanced in racial composition within the area served by various schools.
2. Changing the patterns of pupil movement from lower level to higher level schools.
3. Pairing (or other grouping) of existing schools, each school accommodating different grade levels and drawing pupils from the entire area previously served by both (or all the grouped) schools.
4. Selecting sites for new school construction so as to draw upon multi-racial pupil populations.
5. Creating school campuses or parks, including schools at all levels and drawing pupils from a relatively extensive geographic area.

Enrichment of Educational Offerings and Special Educational Services

We regard integrated education and quality education as obverse sides of the same coin.

It is a long-standing educational principle that the individual need of each child should be met as fully as

possible. Schools in slum areas require programs of remedial education, cultural enrichment, and psychological support to overcome the consequences of the poverty, slums, and social disorganization that are by-products of segregation. Among the adjustments that we regard as desirable and necessary in such schools are:

- smaller classes
- expanded remedial programs in reading, writing and arithmetic
- textbooks and other curricular materials adapted to the needs of particular groups of children
- more and better counseling services
- better procedures for determining the potentialities of pupils beyond the conventional academic aptitudes
- more adult education programs for parents to improve motivation
- similar motivation programs for children
- after-school tutoring

A particularly urgent need is for pre-school education for children from culturally disadvantaged homes — and for accompanying programs designed to enlist the cooperation of parents.

Whose Responsibility?

There is no panacea for the achievement of quality integrated education in our public schools. It is not a problem for the schools alone. The school is in the community and a part of it. The child brings to the school the conflicts, values, fears, prejudices of the community. The unemployment, poverty, squalid ghettoized living conditions, crime and other characteristics of the slum child's experience, to which he senses that he is condemned for life, sap him of motive, destroy his aspiration and alienate him from the upwardly mobile life in the larger world outside.

Neither the school nor the community — as represented by official authorities and voluntary organizations — can blink away the impact upon the child's education of conditions in the community.

The consequence of three hundred years of slavery and second-class citizenship demand a varied, flexible multifaceted, imaginative attack which will engage the collaboration of many authorities and institutions. All the resources of the community must be marshalled in that attack: municipal human relations and other authorities, welfare agencies, employment and counseling services, recreational services, religious groups, public human rights commissions, business and industry, community relations agencies, etc. In the constantly expanding urban

complex, the mounting of the necessary program may require coordination on many levels, from the local school district to the metropolitan area.

But, while all this is true, educators do have a primary responsibility for initiative in overcoming racial segregation in public schools, as they have for initiative in overcoming any other impediment to sound education for democracy.

Integration is an educational good in itself, an ingredient of good education, and should be pursued as such.

And such efforts must not wait upon public pressure. Even sound steps, taken in response to strife or conflict engendered by demands for change, take on the color of political accommodation or concession—which, indeed many of them are—and invite increased counter-pressure, thus compounding the very problems they ostensibly seek to resolve.

The causes of de facto public school segregation are multiple; but they are not indivisible. Approaches to racial desegregation need not wait upon the formulation of a massive solution.

The critical judgments as to the means by which integration can be best advanced in any public school system are the inescapable responsibilities primarily of school boards, just as any other judgments regarding the adequacy or quality of public education in the system are their responsibility primarily. While school boards cannot be indifferent to public opinion, the views of parents, or the realities of political life, they can neither transfer their responsibilities for exercising educational judgments and leadership to any of these other groups or authorities, nor take passive refuge in pleas of helplessness.

We commend those school boards and other educational authorities that have displayed proper initiative in this regard.

At the same time, we express our keen disappointment over the failure of too many professional educators — administrators, theorists and philosophers alike — to display the creative imagination and to exercise the professional leadership demanded by one of the great educational challenges of this generation.

We call upon boards of education everywhere to make explicit, as policy, their commitment to public school desegregation as a factor in quality education.

We urge the widest experimentation with means of achieving the largest possible degree of racial desegregation in public schools, utilizing approaches we have enumerated and which we examine in greater detail below, and any other approaches that may be deemed fruitful in specific situations.

Diversionsary Arguments Over Spurious Issues

The practical administrative difficulties involved in rearrangements and reorganizations attendant upon measures looking toward the elimination of racial segregation in public schools are real and numerous. Too often, however, attempts to cope with them are diverted or frustrated by disputation over subordinate, peripheral or spurious issues. These issues may be raised by opponents of integration, reckless of genuine educational values; or by honest but shortsighted citizens mistakenly convinced that racial integration threatens rather than enhances the quality of education. In either case, passions are aroused, positions inflexibly taken, purposes on both sides impugned, and the genuine issue obscured.

Two such secondary or false issues are those of the neighborhood school and busing.

The Neighborhood School

We regard the neighborhood school as having important educational values. Among these are accessibility to pupils, encouragement of after-school association among pupils, convenience of parent participation in school activities. Especially important at the nursery and elementary school levels, these values diminish in importance with the age of children, becoming relatively minor at the junior high school level and for practical purposes irrelevant at the high school level.

School districts are not "neighborhoods." Their boundaries are fixed by school boards with a view to serving the best educational interests of children and are changed from time to time. There are no "natural" school neighborhoods. The sizes and shapes of such areas, or districts, vary from community to community and even within communities, as do the procedures by which they are determined.

No specific group has any special right, legal or otherwise, to enrollment in any school.

We see no incompatibility in principle between neighborhood schools and integrated education.

The values of the neighborhood school are not supreme; like all other educational values they are relative and must be weighed against others, which may at times be deemed more important.

The neighborhood school that is used as an instrument for the perpetuation of segregation thereby does damage to the education of its pupils outweighing its positive educational values.

Where a reasonable measure of integration cannot be otherwise achieved, we favor modification of the neighborhood school concept, to the extent necessary.

Busing

Busing of children between segregated schools, so as to change the racial composition of both, is just the employment of a widely used means to achieve a specific educational purpose. Busing makes better education in consolidated schools possible in rural areas. It is widespread in cities and suburbs, where it is used by both public and private schools, as well as by day camps, after-school religious classes, and other educational and recreational facilities.

Busing is not a policy. It cannot be a panacea. Of itself, it has no educational values, positive or negative.

Accordingly, we neither favor nor oppose busing, per se.

We approve of busing when it is the most effective feasible way to attain desirable educational ends, including racial integration.

Like school plants, class scheduling, and other adjuncts and arrangements of the educational process, transportation of children must be evaluated in terms of its utility in advancing education for democratic living of all the children affected. Will the school to which they are being transported help them realize more fully their potentials for educational achievement? Will it augment their motivation to learn? Will it build sound relationships among those of different backgrounds?

Subsidiary criteria are those of cost (does transportation of children represent the most efficacious use of available funds in relation to other desirable purposes for which they might be expended?) and time consumed in travel (does it interfere with their after-school religious classes, recreational or cultural activities?). As a rule of thumb, we would consider thirty minutes as not significantly in excess of average time spent walking or otherwise getting to school in any case.

Practical Approaches

We turn now to examine in some detail the approaches to racial desegregation of public schools we have cited with approval earlier in this statement.

- 1. Revision of school district boundaries to embrace populations of more nearly balanced racial composition within the areas served by various schools.**

We are convinced that a substantial degree of racial desegregation of schools can be achieved in most cities, without sacrifice of any of the values of the "neighborhood school," by the redrawing of school district boundaries to convert contiguous districts that are preponderantly white and Negro, respectively, into still

contiguous but differently shaped districts that are more nearly balanced racially.

We favor such revisions wherever the changes will improve the over-all adequacy of public education. As an element in such adequacy, racial integration is a valid reason, among others, for redrawing school district boundaries.

We reiterate that school district boundaries are determined by educational administrators; they are not natural or spontaneous demarcations. Established originally to enclose populations commensurate with the capacity of the school facilities that will draw from them, district boundaries must be revised from time to time in the light of population movements, changes in neighborhood character—as from residential to commercial, or from single-family homes to high-rise apartment houses—and additional school construction.

2. Changing the patterns of pupil movement from lower level to higher level schools.

We favor changes in so-called "feeder patterns," where such changes will result in assignment of graduates of predominantly white or Negro elementary schools to junior high schools in such ways as to achieve an optimum of racial balance in the upper schools. Junior and senior high schools are fewer, larger, and serve wider geographic areas than elementary schools. In and of themselves, "feeder pattern" changes involve no disturbance of existing elementary school enrollments, and no special disruption of the educational process, since all children move from one school environment to another when transferring from elementary to junior high or high school.

We urge that consideration be given to the reorganization of public schools on a 4-4-4 basis, with the first four grades accommodated in relatively small elementary schools convenient to the homes of the young pupils in these grades; the next four grades in middle schools drawing pupils from larger areas; the highest four grades constituting high schools with perhaps city-wide or other diversified enrollment. We believe that such a proposal may make a substantial contribution to achieving the twin goals of high quality schools and desegregation.

In our judgment, open enrollment plans, allowing any child to attend any school in the system so long as school space is available to accommodate him, do not represent systematic approaches to the production of meaningful encounters among children of differing backgrounds. This procedure has been shown by experience to have little effect on desegregation, and even that little on a haphazard basis. The shifting of responsibility for

achieving integration from the school system to the individual parent, who may be understandably reluctant to send his child off alone to a strange school, is not sound educational practice. Our observation is that open enrollment has been offered in many cases as a short-run stop-gap measure calculated to contain public pressure for desegregation.

3. Pairing (or other grouping) of existing schools, each school accommodating different grade levels and drawing pupils from the entire area previously served by all the schools involved.

We are convinced that the entire school systems of many smaller cities can be effectively desegregated by school pairing or grouping; and that the method can be effectively used to desegregate schools on the fringes of massive concentrations of Negro population in large cities.

First employed in the Princeton, N. J. public schools, this approach to elementary school integration in areas where predominantly Negro and predominantly white schools are in relatively close proximity is widely known as the "Princeton Plan." Its original application consolidated two contiguous attendance districts into one school attendance district, one of the two schools accommodating only kindergarten through third grade and the other school grades four through six. Variants of the plan may involve larger numbers of schools and other combinations of grades. Such a school pairing program, in addition to facilitating racial integration, doubles the number of grade tracks in each school and thus affords greater flexibility in grouping youngsters according to ability or special aptitude (where this is deemed desirable) and in exploiting the differing skills of teachers.

4. Selecting sites for new school construction so as to draw upon multiracial pupil populations.

We believe that the objective of achieving racial balance should receive major consideration in the choice of every new school site.

The location of a new school facility can determine the racial composition of the school for years ahead. It is important, therefore, that site selection take into account not only the fullest and most reliable information about population distribution, but also the most reliable projections of population movements and trends. In view of the substantial amount of school construction now being planned, this is of special importance at the present time.

In the selection of school sites, the character of the immediate environment also should be given major consideration. It should be such as to be conducive to learn-

ing. Too many schools are still being built in decaying areas, amidst cheap taverns, hangouts of petty criminals, flop houses and tawdry shops.

The environments of existing schools should be re-appraised. Changes in the surrounding areas may be possible through demolition or renewal.

5. Creating "school parks" or campuses.

We regard the school park as a highly meritorious instrument of education and hope that it will be widely adopted.

By grouping a complex of elementary, junior high and senior high schools at a single location, thus constituting an educational "park" or campus, pupils can be drawn from a relatively large area, increasing the probability that they will be racially mixed; at the same time, opportunities for flexible curricular planning and scheduling and creative innovation are afforded.

By locating such campuses adjacent to or in the neighborhood of major universities, valuable cooperative relationships between the two institutions can be facilitated.

School parks can be included in urban renewal plans, thus vastly benefitting the slum areas which urban renewal projects most frequently replace and being financed in part from federal funds. The feasibility of including any new school construction in such projects should be explored.

Intergroup Education Programs in Public Schools

We regard physical desegregation as the necessary preparatory step toward the integration that we deem an essential aspect of education for effective living in our democratic society.

We believe that the public schools have the obligation to foster integration by leading children toward ways of thinking and feeling about people that will make it natural for each to regard the other as an individual, to be evaluated as an individual without regard to racial or other characteristics irrelevant to his individual worth.

To this end, the public schools must pursue appropriate programs of instruction and attitude formation that will lead children to accept their differences and to develop emotionally secure attitudes toward themselves and their fellows. Most important to the successful pursuit of such a program of intergroup education is the maintenance of permissive, accepting, democratic relationships within the school among pupils, teachers and administrators. Essential to it is an *emphasis*, pervading the atmosphere of the school, expressed in curriculum and classroom, and reflected in the genuine commitment of the entire system and its personnel.

Such programs are even more necessary to the so-called "one-group" school than to the school of heterogeneous pupil composition. In the former, the absence of "problems" may reflect a complacency about relationships, approaches and programs that are nurturing attitudes and outlooks totally unsuited to effective democratic living.

Teacher Training, Recruitment, Assignment and Incentive

The ability of teachers is the critical component in any educational program; all else depends on it.

Teachers colleges and in-service training programs should prepare teachers better to understand the problems of class and caste in our society; of social change and conflict; and the aspirations and fears of Negro youngsters.

Teachers should be systematically helped to understand the community in which the school exists and the children it serves.

Most importantly, teachers should be sensitized to the outlooks of their pupils; for without such sensitivity, the communication between teacher and pupil, without which teaching and learning are alike impossible, is fatally impaired.

Racial discrimination in any form or degree in the appointment or assignment of teachers and administrators is totally incompatible with democratic public education. Integration of public school faculties, moreover, is in itself a major educational device for dispelling racial stereotypes and for demonstrating to pupils and parents alike the irrelevance of race to professional performance.

School boards should make special efforts to recruit qualified Negro applicants for available teaching positions.

Teachers should be assigned in accordance with the needs of the system. While the preferences of teachers should be given consideration, they must not be permitted to become determinative in this regard. Teachers have no more vested rights in specific assignments than policemen, firemen or social workers.

At the same time, the system should recognize the special demands imposed upon teachers assigned to slum schools, and make adjustments that will provide teacher incentive; for example, classes of manageable size, reduced teaching loads to provide more time for preparation, classroom assistance to enable the teacher to concentrate on the creative educational process, and possibly special salary increments or other compensation.

Conclusion

The provision of quality integrated public education for all American children will require, as we have said, a gigantic coordinated effort by all agencies of our society. It will be costly; the expenditures required will exceed by substantial multiples any amounts hitherto spent for public education. The financial needs are beyond the capacity of municipalities and will have to be met in considerable part by states and the federal government. But what is at stake is the future of our greatest national resource — our children, on whom the future of our nation depends. No effort and no expense can be deemed too great to make sound, productive citizens and secure creative adults of the young people now in our schools.

As Jewish community relations organizations, we pledge the fullest measure of our resources and energies to the interpretation of the need for integrated quality education and to the continued advocacy and support of efforts to achieve it.

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